

Vesalius in English State Papers

By MAX H. FISCH

THE PROFESSIONAL career of Andreas Vesalius falls into two quite unequal parts: the six years 1537-1543 in which he taught anatomy at Padua and composed and published the *Fabrica*, and the twenty years 1544-1564 in which he served as court physician to Charles V and Philip II. The shorter period belongs to the history of medicine and of science. The longer belongs only to the biography of Vesalius, but is none the less of absorbing interest.

Neither at the court of the Emperor Charles V (1544-1556) nor at that of Philip II of Spain (1556-1564) was Vesalius protomedicus¹ nor was he personal physician to either ruler. He was regularly called into consultation, however, during serious illnesses of both rulers and of members of their families. In March 1547, for example, the Emperor suffered from a severe attack of gout at Nordlingen and Nuremberg. Vesalius, on leave for a visit to Basel, was promptly recalled. On the 25th, as we learn from a letter of Zasius, "the Emperor was informed that Vesalius had left Basel, and at once he despatched a courier to meet him on the way and urge him to hurry; for whenever the Emperor is worse he turns to Vesalius."²

At both courts, Vesalius spent most of his time as physician to the administrative and military staffs, to the ambassadors from abroad, and to the embassy staffs. He was in demand not only for his medical services but also for his company and for the news he could provide of goings-on about the court. The chief sources for the last twenty years of his life are the state papers and letters of the Empire, of Spain, and of the countries that maintained embassies at the two courts. His biographer, Moritz Roth, made use of the more obvious published collections of state papers, but his search was by no means exhaustive, and he overlooked the English papers entirely.

In the published state papers of England, Vesalius's name does not appear until December 1546, but we shall begin with some letters from the first quarter of the preceding year which have a bearing on his China-root Letter. Diplomatic relations between England and the Empire had already been strained by the separate peace which Charles V had made with France without consulting his ally Henry VIII. To

make matters worse, commercial relations with the Low Countries came to a crisis in January 1545. On the 2d, Nicholas Wotton, ambassador to the Emperor, was informed that a whole fleet of Flemish vessels had been captured by Englishmen. On the 5th the Emperor ordered the officers of the Flemish ports to arrest the persons, ships, and goods of Englishmen. On the 20th, Wotton wrote to Henry VIII from Brussels that "the Emperor, by his physician's counsel, removed from Ghent towards Brussels the 15th of this present, carried in a litter, being not yet delivered of the gout." A new Diet had convened at Worms, but the Emperor's gout delayed his journey thither and at the same time afforded a pretext for not seeing Wotton but referring him to the Chancellor, Granvelle. On February 4 Wotton wrote to his king: "The Emperor, as it is spoken now, goeth not hence yet this month, and peradventure not this two months. One told me that he intendeth to use the diet of the wood of India, the which I suppose is not the guaiac, but another fashion, lighter to be observed than that."³

Wotton finally obtained audience with the Emperor on February 9. "Coming to him, I found him sitting on a chair, his feet resting upon another low chair, bearing one of his arms in a towel, looking very pale and weakly, worse than I saw him at any time before. After some communication of his disease, and how that the next day he was determined to enter into the diet of the wood of India, I began to declare my matter unto him."⁴ Later that month Sir William Paget joined Wotton in an endeavor to persuade Charles to renew the war on France, and on March 1 Paget wrote Sir William Petre, secretary of state, that he had seen the Emperor, and "as for his sickness . . . I think verily he hath been no more sick than I am, but useth it for a policy. And as for the diet, he told me himself that he had left it a good while ago, fearing, I trow, I would have judged the same by his countenance, which is as lusty, Mr. Wotton saith, as ever he hath seen it."⁵ It was not until April 5, however, that Charles showed himself in public. On the following day the arrest of the English in Flanders was terminated. On May 16 Charles arrived at the Diet of Worms, vainly hoping to bring into line the Protestant princes of the Schmalkaldic League.

The other fashion of the wood of India, "lighter to be observed," which the Emperor had so lightly observed and lightly abandoned, was *Smilax China* or China-root. When word got abroad that the Emperor had tried it and was better, Vesalius was importuned by various doctors for the recipe. Several of the German princes, urged on by their physicians, begged the Emperor to have Vesalius tell them how to prepare and administer the decoction. A year later, at Nijmegen, where he was detained for nearly three months by the serious illness of the Venetian ambassador, Bernardo Navagero, he had leisure to compose an account of the root and its regimen. The Emperor had at first, he said, shared

his physicians' poor opinion of the root, and continued to use the older and much more efficacious decoction of guaiac. (Vesalius himself had written a long consilium on the use of guaiac in epilepsy.⁶) Spaniards prominent at the court had finally induced him to try the new fad by pointing out that the period of treatment was shorter and the regimen less severe. No great claims for it could be based on the Emperor's case, however, for he had "used it only for a fortnight, never adhered to one diet, and constantly changed his method of taking the decoction, and that, too, at his own discretion." As soon as he began to feel better, he dropped it. He was a most refractory patient; no physician's rules could restrain his appetites; "so much easier it is to speak or write elegantly of these matters in the schools, than to put them into daily practice in treating princes (who insist on retaining command even in medicine), and especially in gout, which sometimes racks every joint in the body."

Vesalius rejoined the Emperor at the Diet of Regensburg in June 1546, and finished his China-root Letter there. "At present the Emperor is blessed with that health which comes to him particularly on campaign. . . . For you know how excellent his health is wont to be when in the midst of the greatest physical exertions and preoccupation with affairs."⁸ From August into December Vesalius was with Charles and his army on the Danube campaign against the Schmalkaldic League. The League finally yielded for lack of funds; the Elector Palatine made his peace with Charles, and helped to make that of the Duke of Württemberg also. Henry VIII of England had a stake in all this; he had entered into negotiations for an alliance with the League; he was prepared, if Charles were defeated, to transform the mass into a communion and complete the Protestant reformation in England. Thomas Thirlby, Bishop of Westminster, had succeeded Wotton as ambassador to Charles. From Heilbronn on the Neckar, on Christmas evening, 1546, he wrote to Sir William Paget, secretary of state.

The Duke of Württemberg hath made, and daily maketh, great and humble suit to the Emperor for grace. I have been advertised, from a good place, that the Emperor mindeth to accept his suit, but not till that he shall first have one or two of his strongest holds in his hands, wherewith to chasten him in case that he should hereafter attempt anything against the Emperor. . . . The Duke of Württemberg his lands lieth adjoining to this town, and here about the Emperor's men of war, both of horse and also of foot, lieth in villages. . . . Yesterday went certain light horsemen of the Emperor's to a village (as they here term it, but it is walled) of the Duke's . . . but they were repulsed . . . therefore thither is gone again this day the Prince of Salamona, with a good band of horsemen, to sack the same.

Doctor Vesalius, one of the Emperor's physicians, dined with me this day, and said that the Duke of Württemberg should come hither to the Emperor, and in that the Count [now Elector] Palatine was a travailer; he said further

that the said Duke of Württemberg had written to the Duke of Bavaria long since, to be a means to the Emperor for him, and in the same letters (as he said) should write, that rather than he should be an outlaw from his country



FIG. 1. The Emperor Charles V, by Titian, 1548
(Munich, Ältere Pinakothek)

fourteen years, as he was once [1520-1534], he would give all the preachers that he had to the Emperor to make a sacrifice of them; with such other light words.⁹

The source of Vesalius's news is not far to seek. The negotiations with the Duke of Württemberg, which shortly resulted in his complete submission, were being conducted by Charles's Chancellor, Nicholas Perrenot, Lord Granvelle. Granvelle was ill at the time, and Vesalius was in constant attendance upon him. That very morning, Vesalius had told the Duke of Este's secretary that Granvelle intended to ask the Emperor's permission to stay in and rest until he recovered; that the court would probably remain at Heilbronn for six or eight days, "and that the Duke of Württemberg might easily come."¹⁰ We need not suppose that Vesalius was betraying confidences; the news he gave Thirlby was such that Charles and his Chancellor were glad to have Henry hear it. In fact, as the next two letters suggest, Vesalius may well have been acting as an agent of his government.

A twelve-month Diet at Augsburg was convened in the summer of 1547. Henry VIII of England had died in January and been succeeded by the nine-year-old Edward VI under the protectorate of his uncle Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset. Thirlby was continued as ambassador to Charles, and was at Augsburg until June 1548, when Sir Philip Hoby took his place. On April 15 Thirlby wrote to Sir William Petre, secretary of state.

They say that the Emperor will remain here until that the Prince of Spain shall come hither with his sister; and that Ferdinand the Archduke shall be married to her in this town.¹¹ They say that he shall bring with him eight or ten thousand Spaniards; and that these princes whose names be written in the schedule here inclosed shall accompany them hither: but they say that before August he cannot be here.

They say also that letters be come hither from Lyons signifying that Pietro Strozzi is passed thereby with four thousand Italians; and that the bruit is there that they shall go into Scotland to aid the Scots against us.

The Emperor's physician said also, that the Emperor had been long in great suspicion of the French; but now the Imperials assure themselves that they shall for this year live in peace. This is what they say, and *he* says: but I say also that notwithstanding I doubt not but that my Lord Protector's Grace of his great wisdom hath foreseen all such dangers as these bruits may bring if they be true: yet . . . I cannot but wish that all things possible be done in Scotland ere the aid come, so that, when they should come, they might have little joy to enter there; and that such forts as we have in Scotland might be so furnished that the Scots nor their aiders should be able to recover them, for the bruit of one fort recovered would be sent abroad in the world as though all were lost of our side. This I cannot but wish, although I know not how it might be done.¹²

On June 1, Sir Philip Hoby arrived. Thirlby and he sought joint audience with the Emperor. On the 5th they wrote to the Lord Protector and Privy Council that it had been appointed for that evening,

but by reason, this night past, the Emperor was diseased of a flux, we be now in doubt whether we shall have audience this night or be deferred till tomorrow, and have thought good thus much to advertise your Lordships.

Herewith your Lordships shall receive a copy of a letter concerning the *Interim*, sent from Melanchthon to Carolowicius, one of Duke Maurice's Councillors. Because it was brought to us undeciphered by one of the Emperor's physicians, I, the Bishop of Westminster, suppose that they be the gladder to show it, for that Melanchthon yieldeth so much to their purpose . . . and yet, in words, they pretend to show hereby the frowardness of Melanchthon, for that he will not wholly condescend to the said *Interim*.¹³

The *Interim*, or imperial "Declaration how things are to be managed in the Holy Roman Empire, touching the question of religion, until the general council can be held," was a temporary compromise between orthodox Catholic, Erasmian, and moderate Lutheran views, until the Council of Trent, which had adjourned a year before, should reconvene.

The imperial court returned to Brussels in September. A revolt in Guienne against the *gabelle* or state monopoly of salt prompted Charles to negotiate with the English government for a joint reopening of hostilities against France. Maximilian of Egmont, Count of Buren, was his envoy. The Count returned from his fruitless mission in December with a severe anginoid inflammation of the throat. Vesalius told him he had only a few hours to live, and, "sworn friend that he was, advised him to put his affairs in order." Acting on the prognosis and advice, Buren "died the noblest death that has been told of since kings have worn crowns."¹⁴

He ordered a splendid entertainment to be made, and all his plate to be set out; and he himself sitting at table with his friends, whom he had invited, distributed very handsome presents amongst them, and took his leave of them with the utmost calmness; after which he was carried to his bed, and expired at the hour and moment which Vesalius had foretold.¹⁵

A whole generation of literature, sentimental and heroic, sprang from the event. Vesalius himself says simply that at the autopsy he found an extensive mediastinal abscess.

In the summer of 1549 Chancellor Granvelle was ill again, "confined to his bed, tormented with pains in his legs."¹⁶ In June 1550 his ankle joints were so swollen and inflamed that Vesalius, seeing that they could not be healed, took strenuous measures for temporary relief.¹⁷ In August, a month after the opening of a new Diet at Augsburg, Granvelle died there and was succeeded by his son, the Bishop of Arras, who had been a college-mate of Vesalius at Louvain. The Emperor's own gout came back in October, kept him on at Augsburg after the adjournment of the Diet in February, and gave Vesalius time to revise the *Fabrica* for the second edition which Oporinus was preparing.

Sir Richard Morison was now the English ambassador, with Roger

Ascham as his secretary. There was much talk of reopening the Council of Trent, which had last met nearly four years previously. On April 14, 1551, Morison wrote to the Privy Council from Augsburg that, so far as the Emperor was concerned, the more show there was of calling the Council, the less it was meant; and that the Emperor's taking the guaiac cure and writing new letters was but to make men imagine that he thought of nothing but the Council.¹⁸ The Council reopened May 1, but Charles remained in Augsburg until October. Meanwhile France was resuming its old hostility toward him. On June 30, Morison reported to the Privy Council a conversation between the Emperor and the French ambassador.

"Monsieur," the Emperor said, "in France and in Germany I am dead once in a fortnight or once in three weeks. True it is, I am oft sick, and could many times, in my pains, be content it were God's will to take me from this painful life. But when my pains do cease, and I hear that in France it hath been noised I was dead, or could not live, I pluck a good heart to me again, and think I find no physic that doth me more good than this my mind and desire to disappoint others that so fain would have me gone. Monsieur Ambassador, I am, as you see, alive; and see that you tell your master, if he will not let me alone, I am like enough to live to put him to farther trouble than ever I did his father."¹⁹

In October, however, the ambassador's master, Henry II of France, concluded a treaty with the Lutheran princes. In the spring of 1552, while the French watched the Rhine, the German princes drove Charles southward to Innsbruck, and from there he fled over the Brenner, through Innichen and Lienz to Villach. While Charles collected his forces, Vesalius studied pathological skulls in the graveyards round about. (If he sat for his portrait by Tintoretto, it must have been on a visit to Venice during these months.²⁰) The princes eventually came to terms, and Charles marched north. Meanwhile, however, Henry II had seized Metz. Charles's troops laid siege, and he himself arrived in November; they stormed the defences through December, but in vain. In January he raised the siege and moved northward, leaving Metz in French hands until 1870.

At about that time, the English ambassador was joined by Sir Andrew Dudley, with instructions for avoiding England's treaty obligations and mediating between Charles and Henry. At Luxemburg, after being put off for a week because of Charles's gout, they were granted an audience;

the Emperor addressing Morison in Italian, as his Majesty was not able to speak loud, and Dudley, by reason of an extreme cold and murre, not being able to hear him; but yet, though very hoarse at the beginning, when he came to name his enemy, he spake so loud that Dudley might easily hear what he said. . . . In all the time of Morison's being in Germany [1550-1553]

he had never seen the Emperor so nigh gone, never so dead in the face, his hand never so lean, pale and wan; his eyes that were wont to be so full of life when all the rest had yielded to sickness, were then heavy and dull, and as nigh death in their look as ever he saw any.²¹

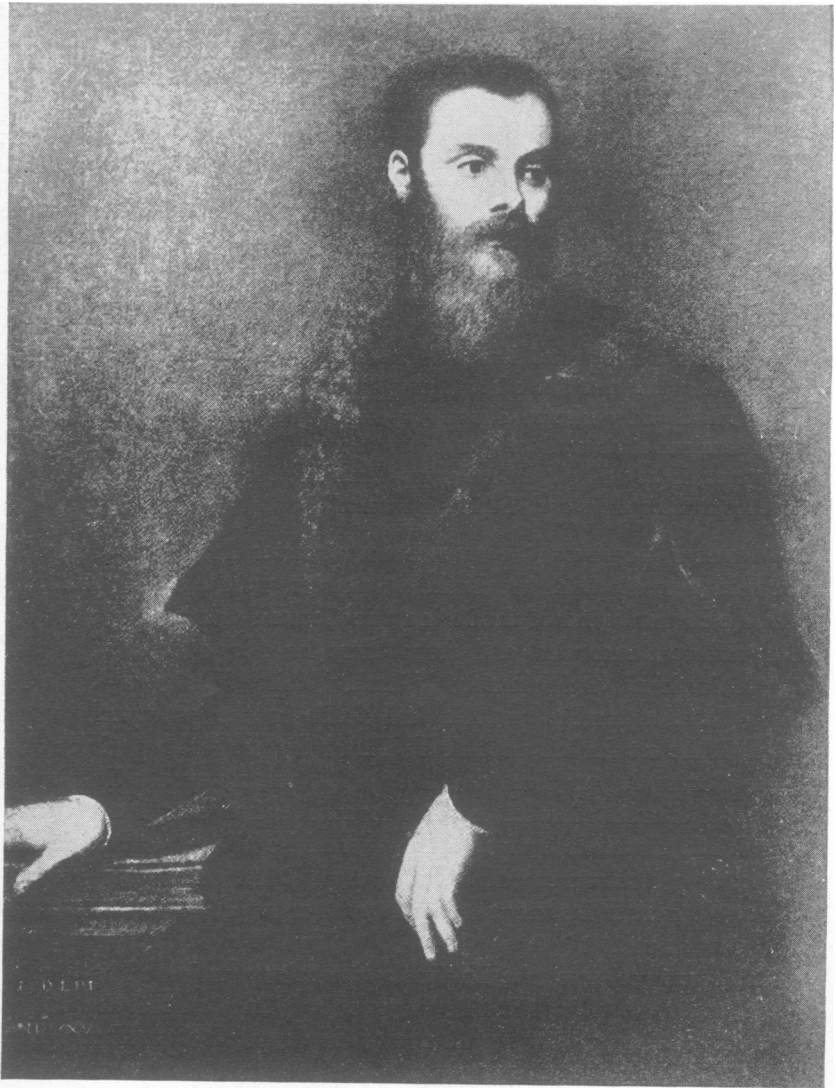


FIG. 2. Andreas Vesalius, by Tintoretto, 1553
(Vienna, State Museum)

The court reached Brussels on February 6. On the 28th, Morison wrote to the Privy Council: "The Emperor is not likely to stir hence a good while; he is said these three or four days to have been shrewdly

handled with his gout." On March 18: "I heard it from good place, that upon Saturday was seven days he did take his rites: howbeit, he that did tell it said he did so because he useth to be houseled twice in the Lent. Others deny it plainly, and say it was for that he had before that fallen into a swoon and was for a season like a dead man."²² And on March 24:

The Emperor is somewhat amended, as his poticary saith. A two days since his physician, Vesalius, was with me; unto whom I said, "the Emperor will make the world set less by physic than you physicians would have it; that the Emperor, ready to spend millions, can by all your recipes come by no health that is able to tarry with him two months together; I ween his sisters will prove his best physicians." His answer was, "it is rather he that may teach all men to honor physic, which hath so oft plucked him from his grave." He told me that his Majesty taketh guaiacum, and is far better now than he was a twelve days since.²³

Sir Thomas Chamberlain was at that time resident ambassador to the Emperor's sister, Queen Mary of Hungary, regent of the Low Countries. On April 4 Morison and he sent a joint despatch to the Privy Council.

While all these stirs are growing great in Germany, and while the French King is plying both the sides with his secret aids and unseen practices, the Emperor keepeth his bed, as unfit to hear of the mischiefs that grow round about him as unable to devise how to remedy them if they were still told him. The Emperor's stomach was this last week very much swollen and he in great feebleness. The Queen, perceiving that pills made of Soldonella, an herb that cometh out of Italy, had done Mons. du Ruellp good, purging his stomach of an incredible deal of water, and other raw and gross matter, willed Doctor Cornelius [Baersdorp] to break the matter to the Emperor, and to see whether his mind would serve him to take the same purgation. The Emperor agreed to it, and at four of the clock the next morning took it; which did so work his stomach, so purge him, that (saving your Honors) he that did carry out that that came from him did faint by the way, and had much ado to keep himself on his feet, so much did the savor turn his stomach. It wrought on him nine times, besides twice upwards.

We had not known of this, but I, Morison, having mine uvula fallen, have had need of Vesalius these five or six days, who, amongst other things, told me the Queen and Cornelius did utterly despair of his life. The Emperor, as he saith, is now as glad that he took it as the Queen and Cornelius were sorry that ever they consented to give it unto him. The physician doubteth much the Emperor's recovery; but he hath a body so able to deceive physicians, and so able to live upon small strength, that till he be gone indeed we will think he hath still to tarry a little while; for, seeing the purgation did him no more harm, it must needs be that it did him much good.

The Emperor's poticary told Ascham that his Majesty is very well amended, and will change his lodging out of the palace into his park garden, and will shortly come abroad.²⁴

On April 11 Morison wrote the Council that the evening of the 10th the Emperor's "poticary did sup with me; of whom I learned that these two days his Majesty hath bained himself, and will continue his baining for the space of nine or ten days. He saith, his head and hands be out of the bain, and while he baineth, he drinketh a sixteen ounces of guaiacum. His Majesty tarrieth in his bain a good hour and a half. The poticary saith, his stomach waxeth very greedy, and the most fear that his physician hath, is that he will make some disorder by eating more than he should."²⁵

Shortly thereafter, Morison was joined by his successor, Thomas Thirlby (now Bishop of Norwich), and by Sir Philip Hoby, successor to Sir Thomas Chamberlain. On April 23 the three sent a joint despatch to the Council in which they said the imperial ambassador to Rome had informed them "that two days ago the Emperor did feel his stomach very good, and did eat a good deal more goat's milk than his physician, Dr. Cornelius [Baersdorp], would he should have done; who, perceiving that he had taken more in than he could after well digest, said his Majesty must no more do so. The Emperor's answer was, they then must not serve him with too much." On May 7 Morison wrote that the Bishop of Arras, Charles's Chancellor, said that the Emperor could as yet sign no letters, the gout being in his right hand. "Everybody is bold with the Emperor, and give him what disease they will, and in what place they list." On May 13, Morison, Thirlby and Hoby wrote that they had it from his maître d'hôtel that the Emperor had been and still was very sick, but they could obtain no precise particulars, "because he is kept so close that no man comes abroad able directly to say the Emperor is in this or that case." On May 31 the three were "informed on good authority that the Emperor undoubtedly is alive, but he is so weak and pale as he seems a very unlikely man to continue. He covets to sit up and to walk, and is sometimes led between two, with a staff also in his hand; but like as he desires to be thus afoot, so immediately after he has been a little up, he must be laid down again, and feels himself so cold, as by no means he can attain any heat."²⁶

On June 20, Sir Philip Hoby wrote to Sir William Cecil, secretary of state, proposing to take a vacation, "forasmuch as I am informed that there is, two days journey from hence, two bains, whereunto physicians here (unto whom I have opened the condition of my diseases) [Vesalius and perhaps Baersdorp] have counseled me to go out for a fortnight or three weeks together, there to remain and to drink of the water of the same bains, saying that the doing thereof is undoubtedly very wholesome for the helping of my disease; the best time of the year being now, to go to the said bains, and considering that my Lord of Norwich and Sir Richard Morison are present here, the matters now here at some stay."²⁷

Meanwhile matters in England were at no stay. Edward VI died on July 6 and after the nine days reign of Lady Jane Grey he was succeeded by Catholic Mary, daughter of Catherine of Aragon and cousin of Charles V. Most of the reforms of Edward's reign and some



FIG. 3. King Philip II of Spain, by Titian, 1555/6?
(Stockholm, Coll. of Hermann Rasch)

of those of Henry's were swept away; the English church was restored to Rome, and three hundred Protestants were burned. Mary was wedded to Charles's son, Philip of Spain. He lived a year with her; she proved barren; he was recalled by his father. Vesalius, according to Brantôme,²⁸ had often told Charles that he had not much longer to live; and the

Emperor had decided to abdicate and retire to a monastery in Spain. In October, 1555, Philip took over the rule of the Low Countries; in January, 1556, that of Spain and the Indies as well. In the following summer Vesalius passed from Charles's service to Philip's, and Charles left for Spain. (Almost his last official act was to knight Heinrich Petri of Basel at Vesalius's request.²⁹) Next year England was embroiled in Philip's war with France and lost Calais for her pains.

On November 17, 1558, Mary died and was succeeded by her half-sister Elizabeth. Philip, loth to relinquish England, proposed to marry Elizabeth, but was rejected. After the long dynastic wars, it was fitting that the treaty of Cateau-Cambr sis (April 1559) should be capped with marriages. Since Philip had been unable to win the hand of Elizabeth of England, he was given, in her stead, Elizabeth of Valois, the eldest daughter of Henry II of France, who had previously been promised to Don Carlos of Spain, Philip's son. The marriage was celebrated in Paris on June 22, with the Duke of Alva serving as proxy for Philip, who remained at Brussels. The Duke of Savoy, whose territories had been restored to him by the treaty, was married at the same time to Henry's sister Marguerite. The festivities in honor of the double alliance included a series of jousts. Henry himself entered the lists the afternoon of June 30 and broke lances first with the Duke of Savoy, then with the Duke of Guise, and lastly with the Count of Montgomery, a captain of his Scottish guard, who struck Henry so roughly with his lance that the king reeled in his saddle and nearly lost one of his stirrups. Though required by the rules of the game to run three courses only, he insisted on trying the course with Montgomery again. The English ambassador to France, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, was present, and described the proceedings that evening in a despatch to the Privy Council. Both the antagonists splintered their lances successfully, but Montgomery neglected to throw away the broken shaft which remained in his hand. It struck the King's helmet as the horses passed each other in the lists, forced open his visor, and

drove a splint right over his eye on his right side: the force of which stroke was so vehement, and the pain he had withal so great, as he was much astonished, and had great ado (with reeling to and from) to keep himself on horseback; and his horse in like manner did somewhat yield. Whereupon with all expedition he was unarmed in the field; even against the place where I stood: and as I could discern, the hurt seemed not to be great; whereby I judge, he is but in little danger. Marry, I saw a splint taken out, of a good bigness; and nothing else was done to him upon the field: but I noted him to be very weak, and to have the sense of all his limbs almost benumbed; for being carried away, as he lay along, nothing covered but his face, he moved neither hand nor foot, but lay as one amazed. Whether there were any more splints entered in, as in such cases it happeneth, it was not known.

Next morning, July 1, Throckmorton was told that the king had had very poor rest, that his wound was very painful to him, and that he was likely to lose his right eye. That afternoon, to soften his report to England, the Constable sent a secretary to tell Throckmorton that the



FIG. 4. King Henry II of France, by François Clouet, 1559
(Florence, Uffizi)

king "was in no danger, God be thanked, but that there was good hope he should be well shortly, as all the surgeons had certainly declared."³⁰

Five or six of the best surgeons of France were indeed in attendance, and Ambroise Paré was among them. They had reason to believe, however, that some splinters from the lance had penetrated the king's brain.

Four criminals were beheaded for experimental purposes, and the surgeons spent four days driving broken lance shafts into these heads and dissecting them to ascertain the probable course of the splinters in the king's wound; but all they found by probing were those in his eye.³¹



FIG. 5. Don Carlos, by Alonso Sanchez Coello
(Madrid, Prado)

Meanwhile, on July 2, news of the accident reached Philip at Brussels, and to attest his devotion to his new father-in-law he despatched Vesalius to attend him. Vesalius reached Paris on the 5th, but it was already too late. According to Adam Henricpetri's account,

as soon as he entered the king's chamber, he made trial with a clean white cloth which he put in the king's mouth [to bite] and then pulled out with some force; whereupon the king threw his hand to his head and cried out

from the pain. By the depth of the pain Vesalius was able to judge that he would not recover. "*Chironium vulnus*," he said, "a wound that will not heal."³²

The desperateness of the king's condition was of course not allowed to get abroad. Three days later, on the 8th, Throckmorton wrote to the Privy Council that the king was still somewhat feverish, and

those who have him in cure, though they say there is no danger in him, yet can they not give any certain judgment what shall become of him, till such time as the days which they call indicatory be past. . . . Vesalius, Philip's physician and surgeon, who was long with the Emperor Charles, is come hither to look to the king, and has the special charge over him.³³

By that time, Henry was insensible, and on the 10th he died. Paré was prompted to write a book on *The Method of Curing Wounds and Fractures of the Human Head*. At the autopsy, he said, they found on the side opposite to the blow, towards the middle of the commissure of the occipital bone, a quantity of blood effused between the dura mater and the pia mater, and an alteration in the substance of the brain, which was of a brownish or yellowish color for about the extent of one's thumb. "In that place we observed a beginning of putrefaction. These, and not the injury to his eye, were sufficient causes of my lord's death."³⁴

The death of Henry II changed the entire aspect of affairs in France, and not least in respect of its relations with England. The crown passed to the dauphin, Francis II, and his consort, Mary Queen of Scots. The house of Guise assumed control, with its intolerance of Protestantism, both at home and abroad, and its dislike of England in general and of Elizabeth in particular. The queen's uncles, the Duke of Guise and the Cardinal of Lorraine, formed along with the Chancellor a secret cabinet for the direction of national policy. All offices in the patronage of the crown were at their disposal, and were filled with their partisans. In Scotland another member of the same family, Mary of Guise, ruled in trust for her daughter. Throckmorton saw the direction in which things were moving and warned Elizabeth in his despatch the day after Henry's death. Two days later he wrote: "In the midst of all these great matters and business, they here do not stay to make persecution and sacrifice of poor souls: for the 12th of this present, two men and one woman were executed for religion; and the 13th of the same there was proclamation made by the sound of trumpet, that all persons who should speak either against the church or the religion now used in France should be brought before the bishops of the dioceses, and they to do execution upon them."³⁵

Mary's mother, the regent of Scotland, died in June 1560; her husband, Francis II of France, died in December; and Mary returned to Scotland in August 1561. Philip II of Spain, having failed to win the

hand of Elizabeth for himself, now sought for his sixteen-year-old son and heir, Don Carlos, the hand of Elizabeth's heiress-presumptive, Mary Queen of Scots. Such a union would have endangered the independence of England, and Elizabeth threatened that if Mary wedded a foreign prince she would take steps to debar her succession to the English crown.

Meanwhile Philip II had transferred his court from Brussels to Madrid in the autumn of 1559. He was accompanied by Vesalius, who continued to serve the ambassadors from abroad and that part of Philip's staff concerned with administration of the Low Countries which he had left behind. The first trace of Vesalius after the transfer is a fasting dispensation which he wrote for the French ambassador, Sébastien de l'Aubespine, Bishop of Limoges, on February 18, 1561, certifying that the use of meat during Lent of that year was necessary to his health.³⁶

The Infante Don Carlos, after suffering from a quartan fever for two years, was sent for relief and for the completion of his education to Alcala, along with Don John of Austria and Prince Alexander Farnese. That was in the fall of 1561, about the time that Vesalius was writing his critique of Falloppio's *Anatomical Observations*. Alcala, about twenty miles from Madrid on the road to Guadalajara, was then a university town rivaling Salamanca. It had been the birthplace of Catherine of Aragon, and it was the home of Cervantes, who was then fourteen years old. Don Carlos's quartan disappeared, but on April 19, 1562, fifty days afterwards, he had a fall which endangered his life for weeks to come. He was attended from the first by his personal physicians Olivares and Vega, and by his surgeon Daza. These were joined on the second day by Philip's protomedicus Gutierrez and his surgeons Portugués and Torres; and on the twelfth day by Vesalius and by Mena, another of Philip's physicians.

Even if Queen Elizabeth had not been interested in the case as affecting Mary of Scotland and the succession to the English throne, we may be sure that her ambassador, Thomas Chaloner, the English translator of Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*, would have given her full reports of its progress. Since this was the most famous case in which Vesalius had a part, we shall give Chaloner's story in full, inserting dates in brackets to facilitate comparison with the official medical reports of Olivares and Daza.³⁷ On May 1, 1562, Chaloner wrote to Elizabeth that

on Sunday the 19th ult. the Prince, by occasion of play (others of them secretly saying in hasty following of a wench, daughter to the keeper of the house) making overmuch haste fell down a pair of stairs, broke his head, had two fits of an ague, which forced his physicians twice to let him blood, and for fear of apostemation to make a larger incision for search, lest the scalp should be crazed. But now he is deemed quit of that danger, like as also of his quartan. Howbeit, the natural imbecility of the Prince (being of such a sprawlish body) and thereto the tokens that he giveth by

the manner of his curious questioning and solemnness, causeth the father (as I understand from some wise men) to conceive small hope of him, partly fearing lest hereafter he should somewhat take after the humours of the Emperor's mother.

Having written thus far I further understood that yesterday [Thursday April 30] from Alcala, where the Prince lieth, came word in post to the King that the Prince the night before [Wednesday April 29] had sustained an evil fit of an ague, with much pain in his head.³⁸ The news maketh all this Court heavy, fearing lest the hurt in his head (which was counted past all danger) doth now aposteme inwards; which, if it so fall out, your Highness may judge must needs be most perilous. Yesterday [April 30] was naught but posting of Lords and gentlemen to Alcala. This morning [Friday May 1] ere daylight the King himself in a coach rode post thither, and the greatest of his Lords and Council followed. I conjecture the danger to be great. Generally the air of Spain is evil for hurts on the head, and Alcala peculiarly noted for one of the worst places. It may be that for some incision to be made to search the hurt to the bottom, the medicines [physicians] require the assistance of the King's presence. For brief, all folks here are pensive, and good cause why, for toil of importance to them this chance may consequently draw.³⁹

On Wednesday, May 6, Chaloner was able to supply further details.

As I wrote, the surgeons in his father's presence on Friday last [May 1] made larger incision of the hurt place; the King brought Dr. Vesalius (not unknown for his excellent skill) from Madrid with him, whose better learning the Spanish medicines [physicians] make not account of according to his worthiness, *quia figulus odit figulum*. So he came *post festum* when the other bunglers not searching the hurt deeply had promised all good hope to the King and made untimely haste to the healing up of the incision, whereby the bone putrefied, as at the second incision in the King's presence appeared (having discovered so much of the scalp as by a pattern thereof here inclosed may appear), but yet the hope all that day and the next was great of his recovery.

The 3rd hereof [Sunday] the Prince waxed worse and had that night a sore fit of an ague with a vehement flux, so as on Monday last [May 4] in the morning when the surgeons came to dress him, they found his wound in very ill terms, promising great likelihood of his death. The said Monday in the afternoon he was in great pangs and peril, abandoned of all persons as drawing to his end. The King himself was riding away, and sent to prepare his lodging in the monastery of St. Jeronimo, beside this town.

But after the news had been given out here a two hours, [Tuesday] the 5th hereof in the morning, that he was dead, so far forth as diverse noblemen wrote from Alcala to provide their mourning apparel, the Prince came again to himself and that morning amended, to the great joy of his father and of all this Court. For though the appearance of the Prince's manners and disposition seemed to denote him to be of a sullen, cruel mode, much mis-liked and feared, yet considering he is the only legitimate son of his father, it maketh them now to tender his loss the more.

Yesterday [May 5] was solemn processions of all sorts of religious for the Prince's health. No certainty can as yet be pronounced of his escape. If he pass the twenty-first day [May 10] from his first hurt, less is to be feared. As much of the scalp bone as is discovered by the incision will scale away. It will ask above six weeks space to heal him thoroughly. His hurt is upon the top of his noddle sideways as he slid down the stairs. The King will not depart from him till he be better or worse.⁴⁰

Six days later, on May 11, Chaloner resumed the story.

On the 5th and 6th inst. there was some hope of the Prince's amendment. Next day [Thursday May 7], being Ascension Day, because his face began to swell, his doctors gave him an easy purgation which wrought upon him fourteen times, overmuch by the half in his constitution to bear it out. The same afternoon the swelling increased, with small fiery pimples called erysipelas, which redoubled the doubts of the doctors and heaviness of the King. On Friday the 8th inst. his state impaired, the wound of his head waxing dry. This Saturday [May 9] the swelling so increased that his eyes were closed up, so that when the King came to visit him he was obliged to lift up his eyelids. The tokens aforesaid, with other notes (as voiding of blood and matter at the ears and nose) signify some apostemation.

It might be said that *turba rixantium medicorum periit*, were not so much as charmers and other empirical professors, having fame of skill by oils or waters, not left unproved.

On Saturday night [May 9] the King, leaving the Prince for desperate, departed from Alcala, and has come to the monastery hereby of St. Jeronimo, intending (if the Prince dies) to remove to some other more retired. On Sunday morning [May 10] another post arrived from Alcala with news that after the King's departing the Prince slept for three hours and was somewhat amended, having eaten some meat, so there is hopes again.

Yesterday [Sunday May 10] being the twenty-first day from the time of the accident, and pronounced by the physicians to be the most dangerous, he not only slept and took sustenance but also the other evil tokens of the wound waxed less. This Monday [May 11] good report of his amendment was brought by two or three couriers to the King. Twice during twenty-one days he has been on the pit's brink, abandoned of all folks and left for dead, so what may fall forth touching his total recovery or otherwise is doubtful.⁴¹

The next day, Tuesday May 12, Chaloner dashed off a less formal report to Sir William Cecil, Elizabeth's secretary of state, with some added details and a hint of his own needs at the end.

Sir, as the fault was great in the Prince of Spain's folks about him at the first, when he fell, and as for the second, the negligent cure of his surgeons upon his fresh hurt was somewhat worthy blame, to begin to heal up the wound not searched to the bottom, whereupon hath succeeded this his dangerous cure, afterwards accounted by many past cure, by the judgment of all his troupe of physicians jarring amongst themselves, which I believe hath hindered him the more. So, if he escape, (albeit wise men may count it no marvel for a weak

body, impaired with long sickness, *atque mali habitus*, falling down the stairs so dangerously, to be brought to such consequence as during this while he hath been twice left for dead), never trust me if ye heard not hereafter that his escape by these men shall be accounted for a miracle and imputed to the merits of some saint.

Here have been frequent and solemn processions of all orders religious, with the images of our Lady and saints borne about, and amongst the rest an image of our Lady pertaining to a monastery of Black Friars, hereby accounted of great virtue for miracles, which, after the procession done, was left all night for more devotion in the palace chapel.

At Alcala, shepherds and Moors, which heal with oils, with clouts wetted in water, and with charms, have been admitted to the Prince's cure.⁴² Relics [have been] applicated to his wound; and lastly the corpse of a dead friar, now for his miracles accounted a saint, named Fray Diego de Alcala, was brought to the Prince [Saturday May 9] and laid all night in bed by him, which friar that died many years since, as now I am told, is counted a great miracle. If God send the Prince to escape, that friar is not unlike to be canonized for his labor.⁴³

This bearer can partly declare unto you the manner of the flagellants which here went in procession a six days past [Tuesday May 5]. Surely the Prince's peril hath been great and accounted by physicians (as their learning led them) to be past cure, and but now upon contrary tokens, seeing the worsen notes do by degrees pass away, they pronounce again that there is good hope. If the Prince's hurt had healed suddenly in the midst of his greatest paroxysms, that would I also have counted for a miracle indeed. Now I believe that God's minister, nature, hath in despite of the surgeons' inconsiderate dealing, done more for the Prince than they were aware of; and sure in so great a personage, whose smallest accidents are spoken of abroad, this so notable a chance may well be esteemed wonderful; but I, for my part, wonder more at this unseasonable cold in the midst of Spain since May began, that for very cold I have been driven to lay as many clothes upon my bed as if it were midwinter, so many days together it hath rained here excessively.

Of the dearth of things, and of my state, this bearer can inform you, unto whose good will and approved benevolence I remit myself, wishing unto your honor all good success and well to fare.

From Madrid Tuesday XII May 1562.

I have not money from home. The summer it will be a miracle for me to hold out in this dear country; I pray you take upon you to play the saint for me.⁴⁴

On Thursday, May 14, Chaloner again wrote to Cecil, saying that he would have sent these despatches by the regular post to Flanders, but it seemed that none had left since the Prince's fall; moreover, the civil war which had broken out in France with the Duke of Guise's massacre of Huguenots at Vassy on March 1, made the regular post precarious. In the meantime he thought it not meet "to suffer uncertain rumors from France or Flanders to detain the Queen's Majesty in sus-

pense, not hearing directly from me how things here pass." He was therefore sending the pouch by his servant Henry King, who would take hackney mules to Bayonne and the post thence to Paris to pick up Throckmorton's pouch; and so to London. "The Prince has yesterday had a sore fit of an ague. The surgeons mislike that his wound is so dry, and doth not yield more matter. *Adhuc sub judice lis est*, though openly men say he is past danger."⁴⁵

Vesalius had maintained all along that the serious lesion was internal and had advocated trephining. According to Daza, he "had plenty of good reasons to support his view," and Portugués sided with him. Daza himself and the rest were opposed, but Philip and the men of court persuaded them to yield when other measures seemed to have failed. On May 9, therefore, first Portugués and then Daza had trephined until it appeared that the bone was white and sound and its bleeding convinced everyone that there was no need to continue. Everyone, that is, but Vesalius and Portugués, who persisted in their view. (According to Olivares, Vesalius stood alone.) Finally, on Saturday May 16, however, Vesalius was at least partially vindicated. On pressing the Prince's left eyeball, the doctors agreed that there was an accumulation of pus behind it. On the advice of Vesalius (as we learn from a letter of Charles de Tisnacq to the Duchess of Parma⁴⁶), the left orbit was incised and drained by Philip's surgeon Torres. In the evening the same operation was performed through the right orbit. This was repeated at intervals, and the Prince began steadily to improve. His fever dropped, and on Friday, May 22, it ceased.

On Sunday the 24th, Chaloner wrote to Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, the ambassador to France: "The Prince of Spain is well amended. This Trinity Sunday the King made a solemn procession, the Sacrament carried for thanksgiving, with many ambassadors; I neither called, nor at it."⁴⁷ (Chaloner, as a Protestant, was not invited; he could scarcely have entered into the spirit of the occasion.) On June 1, he wrote to Cecil: "The Prince of Spain is well recovered, and now the former sorrow turns into feasts." And finally, on June 8, again to Cecil, he reported that the Prince had "voided from the bruise of his scalp a bone or scalp triangle, broader than a shilling." (According to the reports of Olivares and Daza, this occurred on June 2; according to Daza, the sequestrum had "the shape of a heart.") Chaloner's last word was: "During the Prince's illness all mouths were filled therewith; now it is these troubles in France."⁴⁸

The Prince's life was thus saved for the time being, but it was more obvious than ever that he was mentally and emotionally unbalanced if not insane and sexually impotent; and Philip quietly abandoned the project for marrying him to the Queen of Scots, though that was the

Prince's chief desire and she was still willing, and though some of her counselors continued to make overtures.

Chaloner obviously drew his information from many sources, but a good deal of it must have come from Vesalius himself. The French ambassador at Madrid had frequent reports from Vesalius and others at Carlos's bedside,⁴⁹ and it is probable that Chaloner had also. He may even have detailed a member of his staff to represent the embassy at Alcala and keep him informed. The most likely person for that was William Phayre, whom he employed "for the use of the Spanish tongue and practise of this court and country, which few can better supply."⁵⁰ Phayre would have depended chiefly upon Vesalius, as physician to the embassy staffs. These conjectures derive some support from the letters next to be quoted.

From October 1563 through January 1564 the Cortes of Aragon were in session at Monzón, nearly three hundred miles from Madrid on the road to Barcelona. Vesalius accompanied Philip's court thither, and Chaloner followed with most of his staff. On October 17, 1563, Chaloner wrote to Queen Elizabeth that he was much troubled with kidney stone, of which his father had died. His long stay at Madrid, "with drinking these Spanish wines," had aggravated his trouble. "Doctor Vesalius" had told him that his kidneys were "exulcerated with the fretting of the stone this journey" from Madrid to Monzón, and that "rest and abstinence from all wine, and to drink only the decoction of liquorice and barley, must be a ground of his cure."⁵¹ Leaving Phayre at Monzón to keep him in constant touch with the court, Chaloner had therefore retired to Barbastro, a dozen miles to the north, to nurse his failing health. Vesalius visited him there from time to time, as we learn from some letters that passed between Phayre and Chaloner in January 1564. On the 11th, Phayre wrote that he had called at Vesalius's house in Monzón, but he was not at home. On the 13th, Chaloner wrote that he would send for Vesalius within a day or two. The next day he wrote that he wished "Doctor Vesalius would dine with him at Barbastro on Sunday or Monday."⁵²

Chaloner was at Barcelona in March, and back at Madrid in April. Philip did not return until May, and Vesalius did not return at all, for by that time he had passed through Venice on his way to Jerusalem.⁵³ Chaloner must have known the circumstances under which Vesalius left Spain on his last journey, and he probably wrote some account of them, but none appears in his published letters.

The last mention of Vesalius in the published state papers of England is also the earliest notice of his death. It appears among other 'intelligences' from Vienna, under date of November 9, 1564, and is tantalizingly brief. "Doctor Vesalius, returning from Jerusalem, is dead at Zante."⁵⁴

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¹ It seems not to have been noticed that Narcissus Vertunus of Naples, to whom Vesalius had dedicated his *Tabulae sex* in 1538, remained Charles's protomedicus until

his death in 1551 or early in 1552. Baersdorp should have succeeded to the title by right of seniority, but Charles, perhaps to avoid choosing between him and Vesalius, left the position unfilled. See K.84 and read Narcisso for Naseisso.

² R.218 f. ³ A.10.254, 268. ⁴ A.10.274 f. ⁵ A.10.320.

⁶ R.409-19. ⁷ J.15 f. ⁸ J.15. ⁹ A.11.389-91. ¹⁰ Q.15.

¹¹ Thirlby, as Tytler notes, should have written not Ferdinand but Maximilian, his son. Maximilian was married to his cousin Donna Maria at Barcelona in October 1548.

¹² E.88 f. ¹³ E.98 f. ¹⁴ O.314. ¹⁵ M.259.

¹⁶ B.43. ¹⁷ R.406 f. ¹⁸ B.88. ¹⁹ B.135.

²⁰ S.94-97. ²¹ B.239 f. ²² B.251, 256. ²³ F.165.

²⁴ F.168 f. ²⁵ B.262. ²⁶ B.267, 277, 280, 285.

²⁷ D.151. ²⁸ O.55. ²⁹ R.423 f.

³⁰ G.150-4; cf. C.1.347 f., 356. ³¹ N.416. ³² R.243.

³³ C.1.364. ³⁴ L.cxl. ³⁵ G.161; cf. C.1.380.

³⁶ R.420. ³⁷ P.15.553-74 (Olivares); 18.537-63 (Daza).

³⁸ "As is so typical of erysipelas, the dreadful red scourge of the early surgeons, on the tenth day the Prince developed a chill and by the next day his condition was regarded as grave." T.535.

³⁹ C.5.27, 28. ⁴⁰ C.5.28 f. ⁴¹ C.5.29 f.

⁴² Daza (P.18.548 f.) relates that the doctors had been repeatedly urged to try the salves, one black and one white, of a quack named Pinterete, a Moor from Valencia. They distrusted panaceas of unknown ingredients, but the general clamor became too much for them, and they finally yielded. Pinterete arrived the night of May 9 (the night the corpse of Fray Diego lay with Don Carlos); the ointments were first applied on the 10th; Pinterete applied them with his own hands on the 11th; Portuguese applied them on the 12th. Whereas the Prince's general condition improved from Saturday night on, the wound grew steadily worse from the caustic effect of the black ointment. "So we agreed to dispense with the ointments and the little Moor, and he went to Madrid to take care of Hernando de Vega, whom he sent to heaven with the help of his ointments."

⁴³ Fray Diego, cook of the Franciscan convent at Alcala, had died a century before in 1463. Don Carlos had been delirious for five days. As he remembered the episode later, Fray Diego had appeared to him that Saturday night in Franciscan garb, and Carlos, taking him for St. Francis, had asked him why he did not bear the stigmata. Carlos did not remember the answer, but only that Fray Diego had consoled him and told him he would not die of his fall. In the course of his recovery, Carlos vowed many times that Fray Diego should be canonized. This came to pass in 1588, twenty-six years after the miracle. Still later, Murillo, in his *Cuisine des anges*, painted him raised to heaven by ecstasy, with angels gathered round his kettle.

⁴⁴ H.2.639 f.; cf. C.5.32. ⁴⁵ H.2.640 f.; cf. C.5.34.

⁴⁶ H.1.89. ⁴⁷ D.385. ⁴⁸ C.5.69, 84, 85. ⁴⁹ H.2.634.

⁵⁰ C.5.256. ⁵¹ C.6.571. ⁵² C.7.11, 12, 13. ⁵³ R.273 f.

⁵⁴ C.7. 232. If it be wondered how much the name of Vesalius meant to the English sovereigns, their secretaries of state and privy councilors, who received these despatches, it may be worth recalling that Geminus's copperplate rendering of the *Fabrica* woodcuts was dedicated, in three successive editions, to the three sovereigns concerned: Henry VIII (1545), Edward VI (1553), and Elizabeth (1559); that Geminus was surgeon to Edward VI; and that John Caius, who probably promoted the publication, had been Vesalius's friend and fellow-lodger at Padua. I venture to add a quotation from one of the sermons of Henry Bullinger, the Swiss reformer, which were dedicated to Edward VI in 1550. God, he says, is known by his works, and these may be two ways considered: either as laid before us to behold in things created for the behoof of men, as in heaven and in earth and in those things that are in heaven and in earth. . . . "Or else the works of God are set forth for us to behold in man, the very lord and prince of all creatures: not so much in the workmanship or making of man, which Lactantius and Andreas Vesalius have passingly painted out for all men to see; as in the works which toward man, or in man, or by man the Lord himself doth finish and bring to pass." Parker Society Publications 42.151 f.